

Where Islam and Christianity Agree and Differ on Jesus

Wilson: The whole issue of Islamic monotheism, by your explanation, has become clear. The Islamic teaching concerning Jesus also has been made clear. Now I would like a summary of the points on which Islam and Christianity agree in regard to Jesus.

Chirri: Islam agrees with Christianity, in general, on the following points:

1. Islam advocates the holiness of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is an essential part of the Islamic teaching to revere Jesus and to believe in his holiness, and that he lived in this world as a pure person free of any sin. From the Holy Qur'an:

“When the angels said: ‘O Mary! Surely God gives thee good news of a word from Him whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter, and of those who are highly accepted by God.’” 3:45

2. Islam declares the holiness of Mary, the mother of Jesus. No Muslim can doubt the decency and purity of Mary. She, according to the Qur'an, had been the most noble among the women of the nations:

“And when the angels said: ‘O Mary! Certainly God has chosen thee and made thee pure and has preferred thee above the women of all nations. O Mary! Be obedient to thy Lord, prostrate thyself and bow with those who bow (in worship).’” 3:42-43

3. Islam declares that Jesus was miraculously born from a virgin mother with no father. From the Holy Qur'an:

“And mention Mary in the book. When she withdrew to a place east of her family. She screened herself from them; then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared to her as a man in all respects. She said: ‘I seek refuge in God against you if you are righteous.’ He said: ‘I am only a Messenger of Thy Lord to grant to you a pure boy.’ She said: ‘How can I have a son, and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?’ He said: ‘So (it will be). Thy Lord says: ‘It

is easy for Me; and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us. And it is a matter decreed.” Then she conceived him; and withdrew with him to a remote place. And the throes of childbirth drove her to the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: ‘Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten.’ So a voice came to her from beneath her: ‘Grieve not, surely thy Lord has provided a stream beneath thee. And shake towards thee the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on thee fresh ripe dates. So eat and drink and be pleased. Then if thou seest any human, say: “Surely I have vowed a fasting for the sake of the Beneficent, so I will not speak to any human today.”’ 19:16–26

4. The Qur'an attributes to Jesus many of the miracles which are mentioned in the Gospel. According to the Holy Qur'an, Jesus was empowered by God to cure the sick, revive the dead, and make the blind see:

“...and He (God) will make him (Jesus) a messenger to the children of Israel (saying): ‘I have come to you with a sign from your Lord that I fashion for you, out of clay, the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by permission of God. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead by permission of God. And I announce unto you what ye eat and what ye store in your houses. Lo! Herein verily is a sign for you, if ye are to be believers.’” 3:49

In addition to this, the Holy Qur'an ascribes to Jesus a miracle that is not recorded in the gospels: Jesus spoke clearly while he was in the cradle:

“Then she came to her people with him, carrying him. They said: ‘O Mary, thou hast indeed brought a strange thing. O sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother an unchaste woman.’ But she pointed to him. They said: ‘How should we speak to a one who is a child in the cradle?’ He said: ‘I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet; and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and purity so long as I live. And to be kind to my mother; and He has not made me insolent, un-blessed. And Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised to life (in the Hereafter).’” 19:27–33

Wilson: The points of agreement, by your explanations, have become clear. I know that the followers of various religions have differed on the issue of Jesus Christ. Some of them can be considered anti-Jesus because they deny his holiness and the holiness of his mother, disbelieve in his miracles and reject his truth; some of them are neutral, neither for nor anti-Jesus; and some of them are pro-Jesus, believing in his holiness and accepting all his teachings and believing in his miracles.

According to your explanation, Muslims ought to be considered pro-Jesus, as well as the Christians themselves. What remains now is to see the points in which the Muslims and the Christians disagree concerning Jesus.

Chirri: The area of disagreement between Islam and Christianity, concerning Jesus, includes the following points:

1. Although Islam accepts the holiness of Jesus, it denies his divinity. According to the teaching of Islam, Jesus is no deity. He is not God, nor is he united with God. He is worthy of reverence and great respect, but he is not worthy of worship. Islam is uncompromising in its Monotheism. God is only One, and there is no God but He, the Almighty, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent, the Infinite in life, knowledge, and power.

Jesus is not ever-living. He was born less than 2000 years ago, and according to the gospels, he died after a very short life. He is not almighty because he was a subject of persecution; nor was he infinite. He could not be the Creator of the world because the world is over four billion years old, while he was born less than two thousand years ago. He is not worthy of worship because he himself was a humble worshipper of God.

2. Jesus, according to the teaching of Islam, is not a son of God. God does not have any son or child, because He is above that. Bodily parenthood is inconceivable in His case because He is not physical. Spiritual parenthood also is not conceivable, because He is the Creator of every spiritual and material being. The Holy Qur'an is clear on this point:

“And (they) impute falsely, without knowledge, sons and daughters unto Him. Glorified be He and high exalted above (all) that they ascribe (unto Him). The Originator of the heavens and the Earth! How can He have a child when there is no consort for Him, when He created all things and is Aware of all things? Such is God, your Lord. There is no God save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He taketh care of all things.” 6: 100–102

3. Islam denies the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus did not die on the cross. The Holy Qur'an is clear on this point.

“And because of their saying: ‘We slew the Messiah Jesus Son of Mary, the Messenger of God.’ They slew him not nor crucified him, but appeared so unto them; and lo! Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof but the pursuit of a conjecture; for certain they slew him not, but God took him up to Himself. God is Ever-Mighty, Wise.” 4: 157–158

Wilson: This view is in a sharp contrast with the statements of all the gospels. The four gospels clearly state that Jesus died on the cross. How can we reconcile this with the statement of the Qur'an which denies emphatically the death of Jesus on the cross?

Chirri: There is a way to reconcile the Qur'anic statement with the statements of the gospels: The difference between the two statements could be a difference between appearance and reality. No doubt, some event had taken place at the time of what seemed to be the crucifixion of Jesus and his death on

the cross. The life of Jesus was full of miracles, and so could be what seemed to be his death. It could have been that another person (such as Judas, the one who betrayed him) was miraculously likened to him, and he, not Jesus, died on the cross.

There is another way to reconcile the two statements without resort to assumption of any miracle: Suppose Jesus was put on the cross, and that he had fainted, so he appeared dead, while he was still alive.

This assumption is not without evidence from the gospels: The gospels state that Jesus did not stay very long on the cross. He was taken down hurriedly, without breaking his legs, while it was the custom to break the legs of the crucified. The Jews were preparing to celebrate Passover. They did not want him to stay on the cross until the next day, Saturday, on which they are not supposed to do any work such as burial. As Jesus did not stay too long on the cross, he could have remained alive.

The gospels state also that after Jesus appeared to be dead, a man struck at his body with a lance, and that the blood gushed out from his body. We know that blood does not flow from a dead body. This indicates that Jesus was still alive.

The gospels state that Jesus was laid in his tomb, and that a heavy stone was laid above the tomb, and that on Sunday, the body was missing, and that the stone was removed from the mouth of the tomb. We have the right to suspect that some of the disciples of Jesus removed the stone and rescued him. Were Jesus resurrected miraculously, there would have been no need for removal of the stone. God is able to raise him from the grave and keep the stone where it was. The removal of the stone seems to be a human, and not a Divine, work.

In addition to this, the gospels state that Jesus appeared several times to his disciples after the event of crucifixion. All these appearances seemed to have taken place in secrecy, and that Jesus was not willing to appear openly. Were he miraculously resurrected, he would not have had to hide from his enemies. The secrecy of his appearances indicates that he was still living as he did before, and that his life was not interrupted by a short death, and that he was still afraid of the pursuit of his enemies.

The international society of the Holy Shroud has recently concluded that the stains of blood on the shroud of Jesus indicate that Jesus was still living when he was taken down from the cross. Otherwise, there would be no blood on the sheet which covered his body afterwards.

A Christian, believing in the crucifixion of Jesus, would have a hard time reconciling two of the principles in which he believes, namely: Jesus is God, and Jesus was crucified. A crucified person cannot be God because he is unable to protect himself, let alone be almighty.

A Muslim, on the other hand, does not have such a problem. He believes that Jesus is a prophet and no more. A prophet may be persecuted and crucified, because a prophet is not supposed to be almighty. Although Islam does not have the problem of contradiction, it has solved the problem which it does not

have. Jesus was not crucified. God had protected him.

4. Islam disagrees with Christianity on the Doctrine of Redemption. The Doctrine of Redemption is based on the Doctrine of the Original Sin: that mankind had been condemned by God because of the sin of Adam and Eve which was consequently inherited by their children. Islam denies the whole Doctrine of the Original Sin; God did not condemn mankind because a sin was committed by a couple at the beginning of time. (This will be made clear in the following inquiry.) There is no original sin; therefore, there is no need for redemption to mankind out of a sin that did not exist.

Furthermore, suppose that there is an original sin. To forgive mankind their original sin, God does not need a sinless person, such as Jesus, to be crucified. He can forgive the human race without causing an innocent person to suffer. To say that God does not forgive mankind unless mankind crucifies Jesus, is to put Him in the position of a ruler who was disobeyed by his own subjects. When the children asked the ruler to forgive the sin of their fathers, he refused to do so unless they kill one of his beloved ones. If they commit such a terrible crime, he will forgive them; otherwise, he will not. I do not think that the advocates of the original sin would be willing to put God in such a position. God, the Most Just and Merciful, does not condemn people because of their ancestor's sin. He may forgive them their own sins without requiring them to commit a bigger one.

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